REMARKS

Overview

The Examiner responded in the prior Office Action as follows: rejected claims 61-66, 70-75, 78-80, and 86-132 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mangat (U.S. Patent No. 6,081,814) in view of Dharap (U.S. Patent No. 6,256,633); and rejected claims 76-77 and 81-85 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mangat in view of Dharap and further in view of Dedrick (U.S. Patent No. 5,710,884).

Applicants hereby amend claims 61-66, 76, 88, 101, 109-110, 113, 130 and 132 in order to clarify the subject matter of their invention. Applicants further hereby cancel claim 87 and add new claims 133-134. Thus, claims 61-66, 70-86, and 88-134 are now pending.

Applicants would also like to thank Examiner Corrielus for his consideration during the telephone interview with Applicants' representative on August 24, 2004. During the interview, the Examiner suggested that the discussed proposed amendments may render the claims allowable over the cited prior art, but that the Examiner may need to conduct an additional prior art search.

Analysis

The Examiner has rejected each of the previously pending claims 61-66 and 70-132 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over either a combination of Mangat and Dharap, or over that combination when further combined with Dedrick. However, each of the pending claims as rejected includes features and provides functionality not disclosed by these references, and thus are each allowable over these references.

Moreover, Applicants have amended each of the previously pending claims in order to clarify the subject matter of the invention, and these pending claims as amended continue to be patentable over the cited prior art references. For example, each of the pending claims as amended generally recites that a current context of a user is automatically characterized and used to assist in identifying appropriate information for the user, and further generally recites that the characterizing of the current context is based on information that is sensed or otherwise obtained regarding

the physical environment of user, such as based on a current physical location of the user and/or on current physical activities of the user.

In contrast, none of the cited prior art references teaches or suggests these aspects of the claims. For example, while Mangat discusses a technique for automatically generating search queries, Mangat appears to be unrelated to any use of context information about users as part of that query generation. Similarly, while Dedrick discusses the use of demographic information about users, Dedrick also appears to be unrelated to any use of current context information about users for any purpose, let alone as part of search query generation. Dharap, on the other hand, does discuss the use of what is referred to as "context" information for a user, but the actual types of information obtained and used by Dharap are limited in scope, and Dharap fails to teach or suggest the characterizing of the current context of users as described and claimed in the application. In particular, Dharap appears to describe the use of only two types of user data: (1) non-changing static profile information about a user; and (2) data about prior searches performed by a user on their computing system, which may have occurred long ago and may otherwise have no bearing on a current context of the user. Thus, for example, Dharap's use of information only about static user profiles and past searches on a user's computing system is unrelated to Applicants' techniques that characterize and use a changing physical environment context of a user, including by sensing information about the current physical environment of a user for use in the characterizing of the current context of the user. Moreover, Mangat and Dedrick fail to address these shortcomings of Dharap in focusing only on limited prior interactions of a user with their computing system, as neither appear to teach or suggest any use of information regarding a current situation of a user external to their computing system.

For example, independent claim 132 as amended recites "sensing information about a current physical environment of a user that is external to a computing device of the user" and "using the sensed information about the current physical environment to automatically characterize a current context of the user," with the automatically characterized current context of the user later used to automatically augment search parameters received from the user. As previously noted, none of the cited prior art

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references appear to make any use of such information about the physical environment of the user external to their computing device, and thus do not teach or suggest these claim elements. Independent claims 61, 63 and 110 each include similar language, and are patentable over the cited prior art references for at least these reasons.
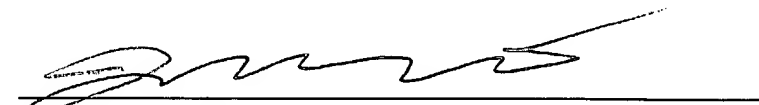
In addition, new independent claim 133 recites "repeatedly monitoring a current environment of a user and using information from the monitoring to automatically characterize a current context of the user," and dependent claim 134 further recites performing the "repeated monitoring and characterizing . . . in a substantially continuous manner so as to maintain a characterized current context of the user that is accurate". By monitoring and characterizing the user in such a repeated or continuous manner, the system will always have up-to-date information about the current context of the user. However, none of the cited prior art references teach or suggest such a system. As previously noted, Mangat and Dedrick appear to lack any notion of using information about a context of the user, and Dharap merely relies on historical information about a user's static profile and prior searches, which are generally unrelated to a current context of the user. Thus, for at least these reasons, claims 133 and 134 are similarly allowable over the cited prior art references.

Furthermore, the pending dependent claims include the features of those claims from which they depend, and are thus allowable for the same reasons as those claims. Moreover, the pending dependent claims also recite additional features lacking in the cited references, and are thus allowable on the basis of those features as well, although these additional features are not enumerated here for the sake of brevity.

Conclusion

In light of the above remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the pending claims are allowable. Applicants therefore respectfully request the Examiner to reconsider this application and timely allow all pending claims. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned at (206) 694-4815.

Respectfully submitted,
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Enclosures:
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Petition for an Extension of Time

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SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW PURSUANT TO 37 CFR § 1.133

Applicants would like to thank Examiner for his consideration during the telephone interview with Applicants' representative on August 24, 2004, at which Applicants discussed the cited prior art and proposed amendments to one of the claims. Examiner Corrielus suggested that the proposed amendments may render the claims allowable over the cited prior art but that the Examiner may need to conduct an additional prior art search.

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